

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 05358 080859Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 /086 W

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R 080740Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5531

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CONFIDENTIAL ADDIS ABABA 5358

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR PINS ET SO US UR

SUBJECT: CONVERSATIONS WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR

REF: ADDIS ABABA 5287

1. SOVIET AMBASSADOR ANATOLI RATANOV TOOK ME ASIDE AT RECENT SOCIAL EVENT TO CONVEY TO ME CERTAIN THOUGHTS HE HAD ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN HORN. SINCE CONVERSATION WAS INTERRUPTED, IT WAS RESUMED IN HIS OFFICE TWO DAYS LATER.

2. RATANOV MAY HAVE BEEN TALKING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS BUT SETTING OF HIS ORIGINAL APPROACH MAKES ME THINK IT UNLIKELY. AT ANY RATE, HE MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. HE EXPRESSED HOPE TO ME THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN HORN WOULD NOT IMPACT ON OVERALL SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS.

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B. HE WANTED TO ASSURE ME THAT SOVIETS HAD IN NO WAY INFLUENCED ETHIOPIANS TO TAKE MEASURES OF LAST SPRING AGAINST US.

C. HE ASSURED ME THAT SOVIETS HOPED FOR NEGOTIATED SOLUTION IN OGADEN DISPUTE. HE RECOGNIZED THAT POSITIONS OF ANTAGONISTS WERE PRETTY INFLEXIBLE, BUT NONETHELESS THOUGHT THAT IN TIME, SOMETHING MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. IN HIS JUDGMENT, SOMALIS WILL

NOT WIN WAR, HOWEVER.

D. HE IMPLIED THAT IT WAS NOT INTENTION OF USSR TO CREATE CLIENT STATE IN ETHIOPIA. USSR WISHED TO SEE ETHIOPIA NON-ALIGNED WITH FRIENDS EVERYWHERE. ETHIOPIA'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS WERE SO GREAT THAT SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TURN IN ALL DIRECTIONS FOR HELP. DEVELOPMENT IN FACT WAS ETHIOPIA'S GREATEST NEED DESPITE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS OF ERITREA AND OGADEN. ALL USSR ASKED WAS THAT ETHIOPIA NOT BE "ANTI-SOVIET."

E. HE POINTED OUT THAT ETHIOPIANS HAD NOT ADOPTED MARXISM LOCK, STOCK AND BARREL AS WITNESS FACT THAT "CAPITALISM" (MEANING NON-NATIONALIZED SECTOR) STILL EXISTED HERE. POLITICO/ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY EMERGE IN ETHIOPIA WOULD IN LONG RUN BE ETHIOPIAN, NOT IN HIS JUDGMENT A COPY OF SOMEONE ELSE'S SYSTEM. ETHIOPIANS WERE, IN EFFECT, PRAGMATISTS. QUERIED ABOUT FLIGHTS OF MEISON PEOPLE INCLUDING HAILU FIDA, (SOVIETS HAVE LONG BEEN RUMORED TO BE REASONABLY CLOSE TO MEISON), HE THOUGHT ROOT OF THEIR TROUBLES WITH DIRG IS THAT THEY WERE TOO INTELLECTUAL IN THEIR APPROACH AND NOT SUFFICIENTLY PRACTICAL. AS RESULT THEY HAD DISTANCED THEMSELVES TOO FAR FROM PEASANTS AND WORKERS AND FORGOT THAT PEASANTS ASSOCIATIONS AND KEBELES WERE CREATED BY DIRG AND NOT BY THEMSELVES. APPARENTLY RATANOV THOUGHT MENGISTU UNDERSTOOD HIS PEOPLE AND THEIR CAPACITY FOR POLITICAL ABSORPTION BETTER THAN MEISON DID.

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3. RATANOV DID NOT ATTEMPT TELL ME OUTRIGHT THAT USSR SUPPORTED ETHIOPIANS IN THEIR CURRENT DISPUTE WITH SOMALIA AS HE HAD WITH NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT (RETFEL), BUT IT REASONABLY CLEAR TO ME THAT HIS SYMPATHIES LAY WITH ETHIOPIANS AND THERE SEEMED BE NO DOUBT IN HIS MIND ABOUT PRESENCE OF SOMALI TROOPS IN OGADEN. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE HAD NO WORD ON RESULTS OF SIAD BARRE VISIT TO MOSCOW, BUT PERSONALLY DOUBTED MUCH WOULD COME OUT OF IT. LIKE OTHER DIPLOMATS HERE, HE TRIED PROBING ON SUBJECT OF REPORTED ISRAELI ASSISTANCE FOR ETHIOPIANS (WHICH I ASSUME HE BELIEVES WE KNOW ALL ABOUT), BUT AS USUAL, I PLAYED DUMB ON SUBJECT. HE WAS ALSO INTERESTED IN OUR POLICY TOWARD SOMALIA (I TOLD HIM WE WERE INTERESTED IN IMPROVING RELATIONS, THEN RAN OVER OUR POSITION ON ARMS) AND ON ETHIOPIA (I TOLD HIM OUR RELATIONS WERE OBVIOUSLY NOT SAME AS BEFORE, BUT THAT WE DID WANT NORMAL RELATIONS WHICH SEEMED TO PLEASE HIM).

4. COMMENT: RATANOV CLOSED CONVERSATION BY EXPRESSING HOPE THAT WE COULD CONTINUE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MORE FREQUENT BASIS. I IN FACT HAVE NOT GONE OUT OF MY WAY IN RECENT MONTHS TO ENGAGE HIM IN SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATION, AND IT MAY BE THAT

HE WAS A TRIFLE WORRIED THAT I HAD NOT DONE SO FOR REASONS
RELATED TO USG PERCEPTIONS OF SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN ETHIOPIA.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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